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Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Current Analysis Series

EXCISE

May 1, 1981

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GLOBAL ISSUES REVIEW

Refugee Affairs

A. *manif*
B. CR/U

Pakistan

Afghan refugee situation grows precarious. Of the estimated 1.8 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, near 1.5 million are located in the Northwest Frontier Province, their ranks further swollen by an influx of some 200,000 since February. As the refugee population grows, both the refugees and the Pakistan government are facing increasing difficulties.

Before the onslaught of summer heat, tens of thousands of refugees must be moved to cooler locations, putting strains on administrative and logistical facilities. The water table is dropping in many parts of the province as numerous wells are drilled for the refugees. Shortages of relief supplies -- including tents, fuelwood, and, increasingly, wheat -- are beginning to occur. As a result of long delays in wheat shipments from some donor countries, grains supplies have been drawn from national stocks. Firewood scarcity has raised prices greatly, and the refugees have felled many trees in some areas causing considerable long-term environmental damage.

In addition, food shortages are causing a rising incidence of malnutrition among small children, and having a continuing affect on new arrivals already weakened by Soviet starvation tactics in Afghanistan. Overloaded sanitation facilities and strains on the medical support system make the possibilities of disastrous epidemics increasingly real.

Problems exist administratively as well. The Pakistani Commissioner for Afghan Refugees lacks resources, such as cash and vehicles, and has encountered both a private and public lack of willingness to extend credit.

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Political problems loom as well. The potential for conflict between the numerous armed refugees and the local populace is increasing. The continuation of refugee raids back into Afghanistan, particularly if escalated into a full-scale spring offensive, further raises complications for Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan and the Soviets.

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